



Why Santa Rocks at Innovation!

It's a good time to put into perspective the critical lessons we can learn from someone who is a true master of leadership, insight, creativity & innovation

He is future oriented

Santa knows. His talent for insight is unmatched. He's aware. He sees you when you're sleeping, and knows when you're awake. For goodness sake!



His operational insight is pure genius

He's organized. He's got a list. He checks it twice. Operational excellence is his middle name.

He's a fanatic on customer oriented innovation.

He knows exactly what the customer wants. There's no other individual or organization who has such deep insight into the customer. And he's had this core focus for hundreds of years.



He excels at customer service

He always answers customer's mail. And even if he doesn't, your peers (whether they be your parents or friends) will let you know in no uncertain terms that even if he didn't answer, he did get & read your message.



He has mastered logistics

His delivery system puts Fed-Ex and UPS to shame. His operation, involving a massive burst of activity in but a brief period of time, should be studied by anyone responsible for managing a supply chain in the global economy. Not only that, but Santa has been doing it for years -- without the aid of a GPS!

He inspires staff with a singular mission

There's leadership, and then there's Santa. He has brought together a team that stays absolutely, completely focused on one straightforward mission. They fulfill their duty with passion, enthusiasm and a smile. They wear cool hats that serve the purpose of reminding them that they are on a team. They are often known for even singing while they work. Now that's leadership!

He's not afraid of those who are different

Rudolph. Red Nosed. Reindeer. Enough said. Santa has got this diversity thing down to a science. Not to forget the previously mentioned staff, most of whom are quite altitude challenged.

He is mindful of work life balance

Some people take a few weeks off for a holiday. Some might take off a month. Santa takes off *entire seasons* in order to recoup from his big night.



He maintains the brand image

Ensuring brand longevity over a span of several hundred years is probably the most impressive feat in branding that we have ever seen.

He excels at keeping up to date

He is in tune with constantly changing consumer demand: he is a trend watcher, always on top of what comes next. A new toy? Santa knows. A new toy that isn't quite appropriate for a particular child? Santa knows. Santa was doing one-to-one marketing long before marketing even existed.

He has integrity as a core virtue

His leadership is based on knowing who's naughty, and who's nice. Ethics are at the heart of his mission, and he uses this to inspire and lead his suppliers, customers, and elves. He rewards those who excel, and provides a blunt management point of view on those who have been naughty. He puts success into simple, basic, concrete terms, and in doing so, inspires those of us who have been naughty to do better the next time. And the essence of his ethical message means that there is an entire generation who maintain good behavior, careful of his watchful eye.

He constantly transitions his brand to the next generation.

Santa is the master of reinventing the brand. Even while one generation becomes aware that Santa will play a different role in their life, they ensure that other generations have deep loyalty to him. There's no other leader who can pull off this feat! In an era where organizations speak of loyalty, Santa owns the concept!

He is a wizard at HR management.

The elves are there for the busy season, and then redeploy themselves as garden gnomes during the summer time. Santa mastered proactive job-oriented skills access long before human resource professionals even came to realize that multiple career paths would be the way of the future.

He's reliable

He shows up. He's coming to town. We know that. There's a song about this reliability. We know that we can count on him. And get this -- even Jack Welch doesn't have a song.



Jim Carroll's 10 Great Words for Innovation

Jim Carroll is a futurist, trends & innovation expert, with clients such as Nestle, Verizon, Motorola, Caterpillar, Disney and the BBC. He is the author of *Ready, Set, Done: How to Innovate When Faster is the New Fast*, and *What I Learned From Frogs in Texas: Saving Your Skin with Forward Thinking Innovation*. Learn more: www.jimcarroll.com.



Observe.

Take the time to look for the key trends that will impact your organization and the industry in which you compete. Far too many organizations sit back after a dramatic change and ask -- "what happened?" Make sure that your organization is one that asks, - "*what's about to happen? And what should we do about it?*"

Think.

Analyze your observations: spend more time learning from what you see happening around you. If you are like most organizations, you are responding to trends on a short term, piecemeal basis: you are reactive, rather than proactive. Step back, take a deep breath, and analyze what trends are telling you. From that, do what really needs to be done.

Change.

In a time of rapid change, you can't expect to get by with what has worked in the past - you must be willing to do things differently. Abandon routine; adopt an open mind about the world around you. The world is changing at a furious pace whether you like it or not. Take a look at how you do everything - and decide to do things differently.

Dare.

Have you lost your ability to take risks? Likely so - "risk management" has taken on huge importance in the last several years. Yet at the same time that you work to manage and minimize risk, your market is changing, globalization has impacted you, volatility has become the new normal. On top of this, your customers are abandoning you, and your margins are shrinking! Aren't these the biggest risks to manage? Taking risks is critical to your future success - don't throw this critical innovation baby out with the compliance bath-water!

Banish.

Get rid of the words and phrases that steer you into inaction and indecision -- such as "*we can't*." Drop buzzwords: seek real solutions to real business problems rather than trying to run your business based on simplified pap. Ban complacency: shake your people up with some pretty dramatic action. Kill indecision: force your team to make decisions based on gut feel rather than through over-analysis of dubious spreadsheets.

Try.

How many of your people have lost confidence? In an era of dramatic business model change, far too many people can convince themselves that they can't adapt; they can't change; they can't master the new realities that surround them. The fact is, they've lost their self-confidence, and they desperately need it back. Solve this problem fast. You do this by giving them a sense of purpose, and goals to achieve. Things to do!

Empower.

In a world of rapid change, you can't expect that rigidly defined rules will be the appropriate response to changing circumstances. Destroy the hierarchy, and re-encourage a culture in which people are given the mandate and the power to do what's right, at the right time, for the right reason.

Question.

Go forward with a different viewpoint by challenging assumptions and eliminating habit. If your approach to the future is based upon your past success, ask yourself whether that will really guarantee you similar results in the future. If you do certain things because "*you've always done it that way*," then now is an excellent time to start doing things differently.

Grow.

Stop focusing on cutting costs - build the business instead. Don't stand in fear of what you don't know -teach yourself something new. Don't question your ability to accomplish something great - grab the bull by the horns and see what you can do that's fantastic! The point is, in a world of rapid change, you must continually enhance your capabilities and opportunities through innovative thinking. Change your attitude now, and the rest will come easily.

Do.

Renew your sense of purpose, and restore your enthusiasm for the future by *taking action*. Too many organizations, and the people who work within them, are on autopilot. They go into work each day, and do the same things they did the day before, with the belief that everything today is the same as it was yesterday. It isn't. It won't be. It will change dramatically. As do you.